

## **In the Claims**

Claims are amended as follows:

1. (currently amended) A method of routing a contact in a network comprising a plurality of contact centers, said method comprising the steps of:-
  - a) receiving a contact at any one of the contact centers, said any one of the contact centers being designated a source contact center with respect to the received contact;
  - b) sending a reservation request from the source contact center to each of the contact centers including itself at the same time, said reservation request being for an agent with a specified relative intrinsic value;
  - c) for said reservation request, receiving at the source contact center from each of one or more of the contact centers, a value of the specified intrinsic and an associated agent identifier;
  - d) at said designated source contact center, determining from said value of the specified intrinsic and said associated agent identifier received from said each of one or more of the contact centers a suitable agent in any of said one or more of the contact centers for processing the received contact;
  - e) routing the received contact from the designated contact center to one of the agents on the basis of the received intrinsic said suitable agent.
2. (original) A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said specified intrinsic is selected from nodal longest idle agent, average answer delay and calls queued count.
3. (currently amended) A method of routing a contact in a network comprising a plurality of contact centers, said method comprising the steps of:-
  - (i) receiving a contact at any one of the contact centers, said any one of the contact centers being designated a source contact center with respect to the received contact;
  - (ii) sending a reservation request from the source contact center to each of the contact centers including itself at the same time, said reservation request being for a nodal longest idle agent;

- (iii) for said reservation request, receiving at the source contact center from each of one or more of the contact centers, a nodal longest idle time and associated agent identifier;
  - (iv) at said designated source contact center, determining from said nodal longest idle time and said associated agent identifier received from said each of one or more of the contact centers an agent in any of said one or more of the contact centers with the longest of all the received nodal longest idle times;
  - (v) routing the received contact from the designated contact center to the agent with the longest of all the received nodal longest idle times.
4. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 3 which further comprises the step of ~~(v)~~ (vi) cancelling unused reservations.
5. (cancelled)
6. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 3 wherein said step (iii) of receiving at the source contact center is carried out in a pre-specified time interval.
7. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 1 or 3 wherein said contact is associated with a specified network skillset and wherein said reservation request is also for agents of that specified skillset.
8. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 3 which further comprises determining at the source contact center a network longest idle agent.
9. (cancelled)
10. (currently amended) A contact center suitable for use in a network of contact centers, said contact center comprising:
- (i) an input arranged to receive a contact;
  - (ii) an output arranged to send a reservation request to each of the contact centers in the network of contact centres including itself at the same time, said reservation request being for an agent with a specified relative intrinsic value;
  - (iii) a second input arranged to receive, for said reservation request, a value of the specified intrinsic and an associated agent identifier from each of one or more of the contact centers;

(iv) a processor arranged to determine from said value of the specified intrinsic and said associated agent identifier received from said each of one or more of the contact centers a suitable agent in any of said one or more of the contact centers for processing the received contact and to route the contact from the designated contact center to one of the agents on the basis of the received intrinsic said suitable agent;

wherein said contact center is capable of receiving a reservation request in respect of a different contact from any contact center in said network of contact centers.

11. (currently amended) A contact center suitable for use in a network of contact centers, said contact center comprising:

- (i) an input arranged to receive a contact;
- (ii) an output arranged to send a reservation request to each of the contact centers in the network of contact centres including itself at the same time, said reservation request being for a nodal longest idle agent;
- (iii) a second input arranged to receive, for said reservation request, a nodal longest idle time and associated agent identifier from each of one or more of the contact centers;
- (iv) a processor arranged to determine from said nodal longest idle time and said associated agent identifier received from said each of one or more of the contact centers an agent in any of said one or more of the contact centers with the longest of all the received nodal longest idle times and to route the contact from the designated contact center to the agent with the longest of all the received nodal longest idle times;

wherein said contact center is capable of receiving a reservation request in respect of a different contact from any contact center in said network of contact centers.

12. (previously presented) A communications network comprising a plurality of contact centers each as claimed in claim 10.

13. (previously presented) A communications network as claimed in claim 12 wherein each of said contact centers comprises a contact center server and a switch.

14. (previously presented) A communications network as claimed in claim 13 said contact center servers being linked to one another by a first part of said communications network and said switches being linked to one another by a second part of said communications network, said first and second parts being substantially isolated from one another.

15. (previously presented) A communications network as claimed in claim 13 wherein each contact center server is connected to its associated switch using a dedicated embedded local area network connection.